

**SHRIVER
CENTER**

Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Founded 1967
Taking action to end poverty

50 E. Washington Street, Suite 500,
Chicago, IL 60602

312-263-3830
Fax: 312-263-3846
www.povertylaw.org

February 2, 2007

Robert E. Feldman
Executive Secretary
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation
550 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20429-9990

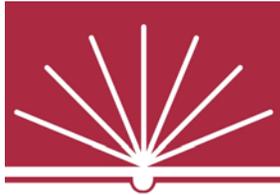
Re: Affordable Small-Dollar Loans Guidelines

Dear Mr. Feldman:

The Sargent Shriver National Center On Poverty Law (The Shriver Center) champions law and policy promoting equal opportunity and support for low-income individuals, families, and communities so that they can escape poverty permanently. We work to find solutions to the complex issues that combine to cause poverty, which is why we support the proposed FDIC Affordable Small-Dollar Loan Guidelines, as they encourage safe and responsible affordable small-loan programs through CRA-based incentives.

The Shriver Center supports several features of the products and programs encouraged by the FDIC guidelines. We strongly agree that credit must be made available in a safe manner that provides sound underwriting, which focuses on a borrower's ability to repay a loan, based on their circumstances and other outstanding obligations. We also support the guidelines encouragement for the loan rate limit of 36 percent, recently passed by Congress for loans to Service members and their families and included in many state small loan statutes. It is also important to encourage products and programs that call for an affordable installment repayment schedule, foster the reduction of the loan over a reasonable timeframe, and including a savings component to help consumers build assets and avoid borrowing excessively for future needs. Your proposed guidelines also clearly state that excessive renewals of small loans do not meet credit needs since repeated refinancing traps borrowers in debt and strips their equity.

However, banks cannot simply pick and choose from these features, but need to consider their small loan product as a package deal that can only meet the needs of customers by combining affordable pricing with reasonable terms. We also support the recommendation that banks avoid extra fees and prepayment penalties that drive up the cost of loans and make cost comparison difficult, especially for open end credit.



SHRIVER CENTER

Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

Founded 1967

Taking action to end poverty

50 E. Washington Street, Suite 500,
Chicago, IL 60602

312-263-3830

Fax: 312-263-3846

www.povertylaw.org

In addition to the features described in the FDIC Guidance, successful bank small loan products will need to be attractively branded, well publicized to its customers, quick and easy to use, and simple to understand with no hidden fees or surprises.

We applaud your guideline that issuing affordable small loans as an alternative to abusive payday lending and overdraft protection will earn CRA points for banks. We ask that you implement this guideline by quantifying on CRA exams the amount of responsible small loans made to low- and moderate-income (LMI) borrowers and rewarding banks based on the quantities of responsible small consumer loans to LMI borrowers.

Conversely, deceptive overdraft protection and making and/or financing abusive payday loans should be penalized severely on CRA exams. All too often, we do not see a careful evaluation of lending on CRA exams such as an examination of whether the loans are truly building wealth or stripping equity from neighborhoods. In addition, laudatory products such as low-cost checking accounts or true alternatives to payday lending are usually praised on CRA exams, but the exams then do not scrutinize carefully if the bank has offered a small or significant amount of these products. We ask that you increase the rigor of CRA exams after implementing these guidelines.

The Shriver Center believes that through programs such as those encouraged by the FDIC guidance, lenders can successfully provide credit that is reasonably priced for borrowers and beneficial for the institution. The availability of these types of affordable alternatives is crucial to curbing the flood of high-cost payday lenders and bank overdraft loans that currently strip borrowers' wealth. The Shriver Center supports the proposal for lenders to receive CRA credit when they provide products and programs with the features outlined in the guidelines, as this responsibly and innovatively meets the needs of the community.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal. If you have any questions about our recommendations, please contact myself or Patrick Hain, at (312) 263-3830.

Sincerely,

Dory Rand
Supervising Attorney, Community Investment Unit
The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law